

THE POWER OF THE PRESS.

The following appeared in Monday night's *Witness*:

In speaking of Secret Societies, the *New Bedford, Mass., Evening Journal* says:—"Secret societies are falling more readily in with the idea of appointing a press agent, as the usefulness of such a person becomes apparent. A press agent who understands his business can be of untold value to his lodge as well as a great help to the press. We hope that the time is not far distant when not only secret societies but public and religious societies as well, will not consider their organization complete until they have a press agent in their list of officers or committees."

There is considerable truth in the statement that the societies are anxious to control, as much as possible, the press of the day. They are subtle, organized and experienced and they recognize the power of the press. In Italy, ever since the days of Mazzini, the societies have sought to hold the mighty lever of journalism under their hands. To a great extent they succeeded and the world, especially the Catholic world, knows the results. In France it has been, and even is to-day, the same. On this side of the Atlantic the tactics of European secret societies are repeated. And now we learn, from most reliable sources, that they seek to get possession of the press in every land.

It was on account of this tendency on the part of the societies that we have recently heard so much about the Apostolate of the Press. Knowing the might of the pen and the influence of the type the Paulist Fathers had been thundering from the pulpits of the Continent in favor of the Apostolate of the Press. When you know your enemy the next thing to do is to learn what arms he uses. You cannot meet a modern repeating rifle with a quiver of arrows and a wooden bow. If the enemies of our Faith use the press as a gattling gun against the Divine Institution of the Church, it is policy that would suggest the defence with similar weapons. The same holds good in every walk of literature. The bad novel must be met by the good romance; the faith destroying work on science, must be confronted with a scientific work in accordance with the principles of truth; the Secret Society organs must be combatted with the Catholic press. The newspaper of our day has an influence such as no other means of communicating human thought ever before had. There is scarcely a man, woman, or youth, no matter in what sphere of society, that does not drink inspiration daily from the fountain of the press. The draughts are either pure or corrupt according as the channel through which they flow is truthful or false. Therefore, they are either invigorating and refreshing, or else they are moral opiates and destined to poison the spiritual life of the reader.

There are some who believe every line they read in a newspaper; there are others who will not put faith in a printed word. These are both extremists. In every newspaper, especially a daily, there is something to be taken with a certain amount of caution, while there is always a great deal of reliable information and most exact statements. We cannot ever regard despatches as infallible, yet that don't mean that they are necessarily false. On the other hand, it is rarely—very rarely—that a newspaper writer will make a deliberate and intentionally false statement in the editorial columns of his organ. In fact there is always something to guard against and others to be taken in full. As a rule the press is pretty exact, for the simple reason that there is such an amount of competition now-a-days and such great facilities of communication, it would be almost impossible for a false

statement to go twenty-four hours unrefuted; and if a paper once got the reputation of being constantly checked it might as well close its pages forever. So that for the great, the vast majority of men the press is a guide which they take up and according to which they mould their ideas on matters social, political, religious and otherwise. The morning paper is on the breakfast table and the evening one is on the parlor or library table. Men would as soon think for going all day without their regular meals as to be deprived of their newspapers.

In that ubiquity of the press lies its great power, and the men or organizations that practise to make use of that mighty engine must necessarily augment their influence in the world. None know this fact better than do the members of the secret societies, and none know better how to make use of the weapon that our enlightened age has placed at their disposal. It, therefore, behooves the Catholic to encourage his own press, to see that its influence is extended as much as possible, and to aid, to the best of his ability and according to his sphere in life, the advancement and propagation of the Apostolate of the Press. And for those whose duty it is to guide the pens that trace Catholic editorials, it is their sacred duty, as well as part of their mission, to elevate, as far as in them lies, the tone of the Catholic press; to thereby make it become a more and more powerful weapon for good. These warnings that the societies are bestirring themselves in that direction should stimulate the Catholic newspaper men to higher and greater work.

BRAIN LABOR.

The recent and sad event recorded of John Ruakin and his brain failure, due to overwork, recalls to our mind a very natural but very wrong idea that is abroad, especially amongst the working classes. It is to the effect that the man, seated at his desk for several hours each day, and maybe for a few additional hours at night, is having an easy time of it and that he does no work. We have known a timber-hewer on the Upper Ottawa, who insisted that a lawyer, a doctor, a priest, or a journalist does nothing. "It is an easy job to sit down ten or even fourteen hours out of twenty-four and hold a pen or a book in one's hand; they would find a difference if they had to work from dawn to dusk with a broad-axe." We saw that same man spend a whole Sunday afternoon in a perfect state of torture, striving to concoct and pen a four page letter to his wife. In the end he had to give up, and from pure fatigue he was obliged to lie down in order to rest his reeling brain and his crippled limbs.

There is a great organic law of our being that cannot be denied. It is to the effect that "brain work subtracts vitality from the fountain, while muscle work only makes draughts upon one of the ramifying streams of life. It is estimated by scientific observers that man will use up as much vital force in working his brains two hours as he will in working his muscles eight." There is no denying this fact, and we feel certain that the laborer in any sphere, outside the literary one, is the best off of men. He has his regular work; once it is done he has no bother, he has merely to sleep and eat, and thereby recuperate for the morrow. But the one who is weak from overworking of the mental faculties finds neither rest, nor ease, nor respite—night or day—on this side of the grave. Read these beautiful thoughts of Rev. J. F. Corning:—

"While I sit at my study-table with my pen in hand, the fingers moving with

tardy paces at the beckon of my brain, I hear right below my window, in the adjacent field, the monotonous ring of a laborer's hoe upon the corn hills. While he hoes, he whistles hour by hour until the clock strikes twelve, and then, with ravenous appetite, repairs to his bountiful yet simple meal, only to resume his task again, and pursue it to the setting of the sun. As I stood at the window watching his toil, and turned again to pen and ink, I asked myself how it was that the man with the hoe will labor his eight or ten hours a day with less fatigue than the man with his pen will toil his three or four.

"Hugh Miller was a great worker with the shovel and pick—would have made a good hand in the slate quarry, in grading a railroad or digging a canal. But one night, as you know, he shot himself in a fit of nervous fever. What was the difference between the great geologist and the man with the hoe whistling under my window? Simply this: the former was the worker of brain, and the latter a worker of muscle. Let this man with the hoe lay down his husbandry for a little while, and set himself to studying one of the stalks of corn or the chemistry of one of these hills of soil, and very likely he would soon learn what it is to lose one's appetite, and hear the clock strike nearly all the night hours in feverish wakefulness."

Well and truly did Denis Florence McCarthy draw his picture of the laborer and the peace he enjoys, compared to the man who has no object in life—except the animal one of conserving life as long as possible. Although once before we quoted these lines, still they are so exquisitely exact that we feel they can bear repeating:

"Ah! little they know of true happiness,
They whom satiety fills,
Who, fang on the rich breast of luxury,
Eat of the rankness that kills;
Ah! little they know of the blessedness
Till-purchased slumber enjoys,
Who, stretched on the hard rack of indolence,
Taste of the sleep that destroys.
Nothing to hope for, or labor for,
Nothing to live for, or gain,
Nothing to light, in its vividness,
Lightning like bosom and brain;
Nothing to break life's monotony,
Rippling it o'er with its breath,
Nothing but dulness and lethargy,
Weariness, sorrow and death!

"But blessed the child of humanity,
Happiest man amongst men,
Who with hammer, or chisel, or pencil,
With rudder, or ploughshare, or pen,
Laboreth, ever and ever with hope
Through the morning of life,
Winning home and its darling divinities,
Love-worshipped children and wife!
Round swings the hammer of industry,
Quickly the sharp chisel rings;
And the heart of the toiler has throbbings
That stir not the bosom of kings.
He the true ruler and conqueror,
He the true lord of his race,
Who nerves his own for life's combat,
And looks a strong world in the face!

"THE HOME RULE SESSION."

The following is the editorial, taken from the columns of the *Dublin Irish Catholic*, and to which we refer upon our first page. It requires no preface:—

The Session of Parliament which opens at Westminster on Tuesday next will probably be one of the most important for Ireland which has ever been held since the treachery of some amongst her own children and the folly of others deprived her of her right to legislate for her own needs and those of her people. From the declarations which have already been made by certain amongst the most prominent and responsible of the members of the Irish Parliamentary Party, it is at least probable that the Home Rule measure which Mr. Gladstone is about to introduce will be not only one well calculated to redress the admitted wrongs of Ireland, but one which may not improbably put an end to the fictitious alarms which have been sought to be generated in the minds of some Protestant Irishmen. If this should prove to be the case—and we have not the least reason for supposing that it will not prove to be so—there seems little likelihood that any opposition to Mr. Gladstone's measure which may be organized in the House of Commons will be capable of defeating a policy which the electors of Great Britain and Ireland have already endorsed and approved. That the reception and treatment of the proposed Bill when it reaches the House of Lords may be different from that which it is pretty sure to receive in the other branch of the legislature is a probability which is already so far discounted beforehand that the

verdict or action of the upper House—should it prove to be of an antagonistic character—will be completely deprived of all political interest or importance. Indeed as matters now stand it is not affirming too much to assert that the only possible way in which the House of Lords could hope to recover any of its olden prestige or could make its decision, in the case of the Home Rule Bill, either noteworthy or important, would be by casting an overwhelming vote in its favor.

So far is this assertion well founded, that it is unquestionably true to say that any vote by the House of Lords adverse to the Home Rule Bill will only come as fresh proof that that assembly is one rather of automatons and puppets moved by the wires of antique prejudice and modern ignorance than of really effective legislators and debaters. According to what is, we believe, an apocryphal legend invented for the delectation of French bivouacs, the Commander of the Old Guard at Waterloo declared that that famous corps preferred to die rather than surrender. The genius who devised this pretty fiction might have with much more truth represented an English lordling as declaring that the assembly of which he was a hereditary ornament preferred to be abolished rather than to be either reasonable or useful. We are far from denying to the English House of Lords all theoretically useful qualities; we are still farther from asserting that on its benches are not to be found some men—such, for instance, as Earl Spencer, on one side, or the Duke of Argyll on the other—whose personal abilities would mark them out for foremost rank as politicians and public men, even if no hereditary title or no hereditary right of legislation was numbered amongst their possessions. Such men as these, however, no more constitute the English House of Lords, as we know it by its actual action, than we much fear they will be able to save it from the destruction it sometimes seems to invoke. The House of Lords which will reject the Home Rule Bill—if it should be rejected—will be that House of Lords, which is unlettered, uneducated, and unwise; the House of Lords whose curriculum has been studied at Epsom, Cowes, or Tattersall's, and whose acquaintance with the olden and more responsible seats of English learning has been perfunctory, if it ever existed at all. Legislators of such type as this are more dangerous to themselves than to anyone else, and it is at least certain that if the hopes of Ireland are to be delayed of attainment by such votes, Mr. Gladstone will have an united democracy behind him in taking whatever steps he may decide on in retaliation.

No matter what the action of the House of Lords may be—and as to what it will be we have had, as we have said, sufficient notice to attach no validity to a decision proclaimed long before its announcers had even the remotest inkling as to what they were to decide—the sterling fact remains that, in the estimation of the most capable and competent of judges, the Home Rule Bill about to be laid before the public is of a nature certain to disarm the criticism of all honest and reasonable opponents. That it or any other measure can possibly be equally successful in the case of deliberately captious and obstructive critics would be, of course more than could possibly be expected. That, on the other hand, it will be found to be of a nature entirely satisfactory to the people of Ireland, while, at the same time, providing those safeguards and checks which reasonable politicians never refuse to yield to the fears of the timorous or cautious, is, we have good reason for believing, certain. If amongst these should be found provisions specially devised with a view to allaying the fears and anxieties which gentlemen of the type of Mr. Johnston, of Ballykilbeg, Mr. T. W. Russell and Major Saunderson have shown themselves so assiduous in promoting in the minds of Ulster Protestants, no Irish Nationalist will do anything but welcome the probable enactment of a law which will be in itself, in its wording, and in its supporters a standing monument of the tolerance, the wisdom, and the self-governing capacity of the majority of the citizens of the ancient realm of Ireland.

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